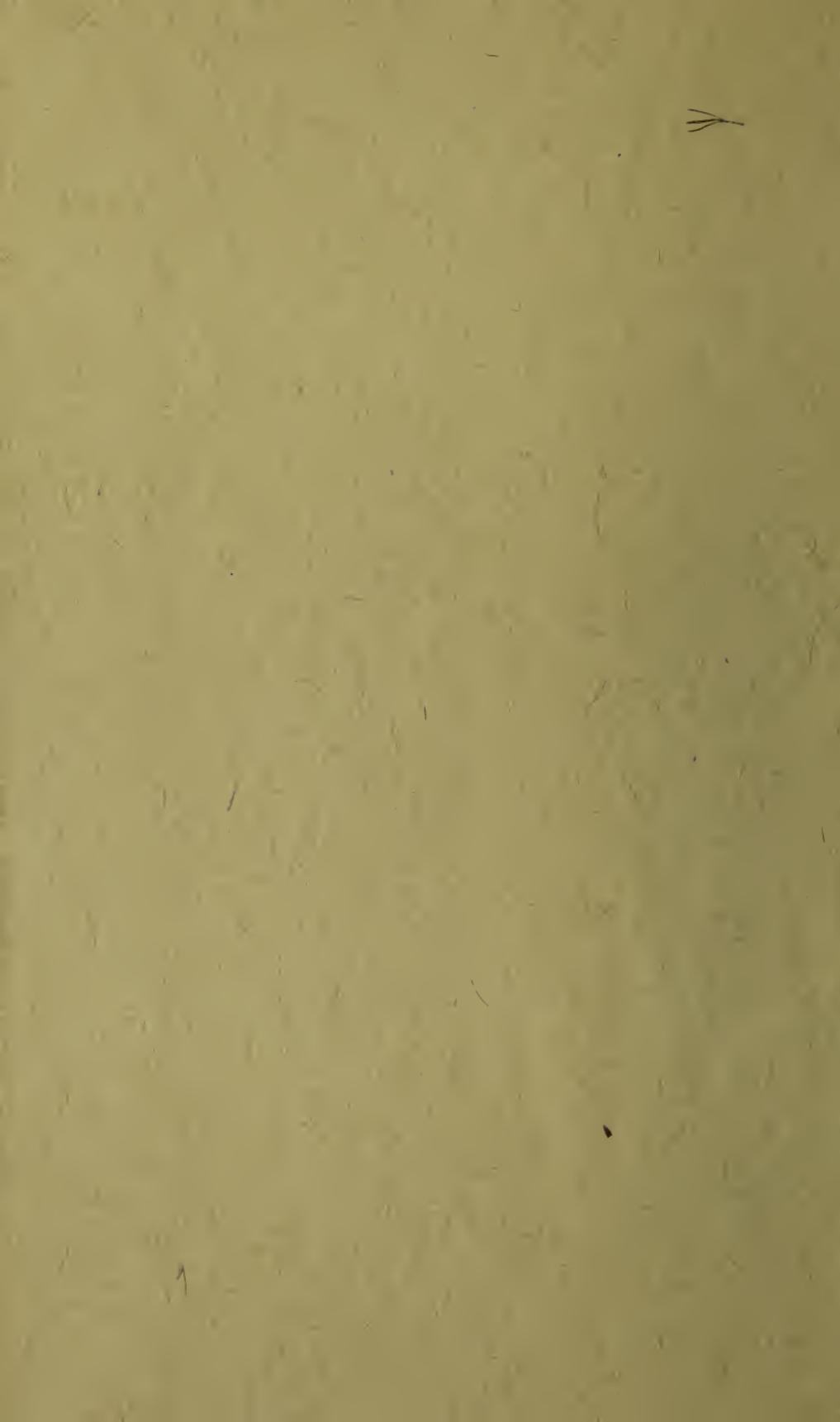


D I S C O U R S E
To The SUPPORTERS OF
New College, HACKNEY

1791

42193/Q



Proceedings at a County Meeting
at Mansfield. In 1782.—

The Yorkshire Recession, or Petition
or Address. &c. &c.—
Extract from Dr. Turneaux's Address to
Justice, Blackstone, &c. &c.—

The Charter-Party of the Friendly
Annuity Company of the City of Lon-
don-derry.—

A Letter to the Roman Catholic of
the city of Worcester.—

Gilbert Heads a Bill for the better
Relief & Employment of the Poor, and
for the Improvement of the Police.—

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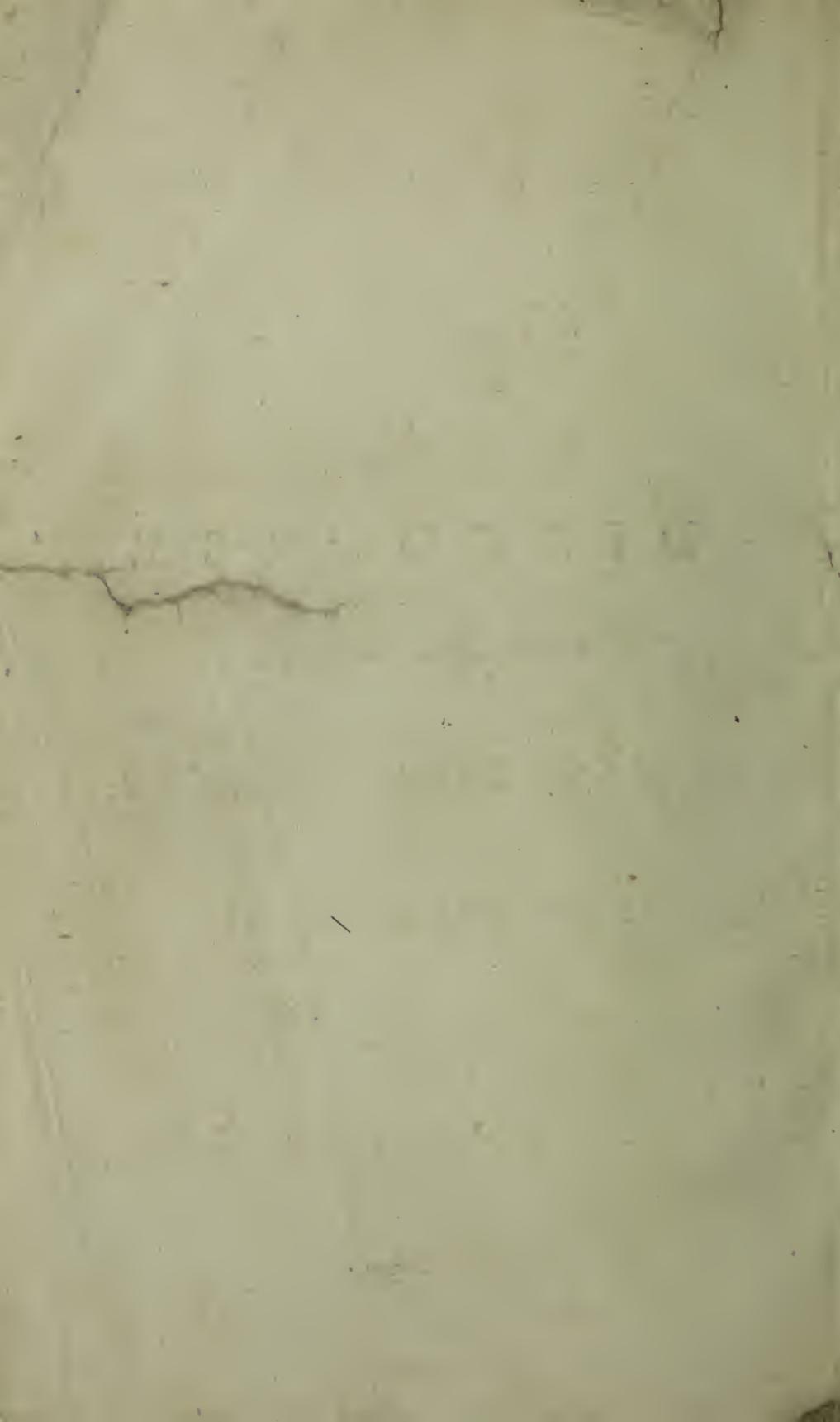
A

DISCOURSE

TO THE SUPPORTERS OF THE

NEW COLLEGE, HACKNEY.

[PRICE ONE SHILLING.]



(e) *Stokes.* -
*The proper Objects of Education in the present State
of the World:* 86149

REPRESENTED IN A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED ON

WEDNESDAY, the 27th of APRIL, 1791,

AT THE

MEETING-HOUSE IN THE OLD-JEWRY, LONDON;

TO THE SUPPORTERS OF THE

NEW COLLEGE AT HACKNEY.

By JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, LL.D. F.R.S. &c.

To which is subjoined, a PRAYER delivered at the same Time

By THOMAS BELSHAM.

London:

PRINTED FOR J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH YARD.

M. DCC. XCI.



MATT. ix. 37, 38.

Then said he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. Pray ye therefore the lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

THOUGH we cannot entertain a doubt of the completeness of the general plan of providence, and of the existence of a train of causes and effects fully adequate to the execution of every great and good purpose comprised in it, yet, judging, as we must do, by appearances, the field of usefulness of all kinds is much too extensive for the few who labour in it. And since the instruments of divine providence in every thing respecting *men* are *men*, this circumstance should operate as a spur to our industry and zeal, to supply the defect. It is a kind of

call from above, to leave our *sauntering in the market-places*, and come into the *vineyard*, where labour is both wanted, and is sure to find its reward.

In science, in arts, in government, in morals, and in religion, we all see the most lamentable deficiencies, and mankind great sufferers in consequence of them, and yet but few in earnest to remove them. In all these spheres of action we see much is to be done, and but few who are able, and at the same time willing, to do it. We are all sensible how capable the condition of men, in all the respects above mentioned, is of improvement, and yet even among those who are themselves enlightened, and well-intentioned, how few are there who are sufficiently *active*, so that when they see an evil they will seriously use their endeavours to remedy it; and when they see any great good to be attained, will exert themselves to attain it? Wealth is a much easier sacrifice than labour, and yet how little of this is well applied? What immense sums are daily squandered away on frivolous and unworthy objects, to

speak in the most favourable manner, and how little of it (and much of that little with grudging, or with some sinister view, which takes much from the merit of the action) is applied to honourable and public uses; so few there are who attend to the advice of the apostle, exhorting every person *to mind not his own things only, but every man also the things of others.*

But the fewer there are who enter into this noble career, the greater is the glory of those who do. In whatever manner their labours may be requited at present, though instead of blessings they receive curses, and instead of favour and reward, persecution, such persons are the great benefactors of mankind, and are far from *labouring in vain*. They are, as the apostle says, *workers together with God*, whose services also are often requited with ingratitude; and with *him* they will have their reward in future, though not with *men* here.

As it is the great object of education to form valuable characters, and to prepare men

for the most important stations in life, this subject is not improper to be attended to by those who are concerned in the support of the institution, the anniversary of which we are now met to commemorate. There is not only, my brethren, a want of great and useful characters in every department of life, civil and religious, but a want of places in which they may be formed; and were the most sanguine expectations of all the friends of our *new college* realized, it would still be inadequate to supply the void which it was intended to fill. Places of truly *liberal education* in this country are few indeed, compared to the number of those in which youth receive something that is merely called education. But, alas! in too many of them, perverted by time and various circumstances, the tendency of the systems is rather to contract the faculties of youth, and to stifle that generous ardour towards objects of public utility, which they ought to encourage and direct.

Small, however, as is the field to which your labours are confined, yet, by assiduous culture,

culture, you may raise in it noble plants, which will amply reward your labour and expence. One cedar is of much more value than many inferior trees; and should the new college but produce in philosophy one such man as Bacon or Newton, in morals a Locke or a Hartley; should it form, in a civil capacity, such a man as Hampden or Algernon Sidney in England, a William Penn, a Franklin, or a Washington, in America, or one such illustrious character as those which are now conducting the glorious revolution in France; should it, in religion, produce one Zuinglius or Luther, one Calvin or (how dissimilar soever in other respects, yet sufficiently resembling one another in ability and zeal) one Socinus or Lardner; should it produce but one of those great men whose exertions in past ages have diffused that light which we now enjoy, and which our latest posterity will enjoy after us, their real value to the world will be greater than can be estimated by money; and the greatest honour will be reflected upon yourselves, who have laid the foundation of the institution.

But colleges and schools are not the only places of education. The world itself is the greatest theatre of instruction, as well as of action, and the actual wants and business of the age in which men live, form them for acting a proper part in it. Truly great minds, without any other hints than those which are suggested by their situation, will hit upon expedients to remedy abuses, and carry on improvements. Indeed, few men who have made any great figure in the world have derived much advantage from what we commonly call their *education*, in those respects in which they have distinguished themselves. Newton did not learn his system of the world from Cambridge. The metaphysical and moral system of Locke was so far from being any thing that he learned at our universities, that it was a long time before it was received there; and as to the still greater discoveries of Hartley in the same field, it is only of late that they have been so much as known to any individuals either at Oxford or Cambridge where he studied, and those only a few, of so bold a turn of mind, and such a spirit of free inquiry as are always regarded with suspicion.

cien and dread by those who take the lead in those places.

Much, however, may be done in the course of education by way of preparing the minds of men for improving such opportunities for public usefulness as may occur. Only inspire the minds of youth with the love of truth, and a sense of virtue and public spirit, and they will be *ready for every good work*. But if, on the contrary, their minds be cramped by systems, and thereby habituated to servitude, and disinclined to think for themselves in their early years, they will be prepared to oppose, instead of favouring, any great and noble efforts.

This country and this age are justly celebrated for generosity and public spirit; but by no means beyond the value of the objects which they respect, or superior to the efforts of religion and public spirit in former times; and therefore you need not fear being taxed with folly or extravagance, with such an object as you now have in view,

The primitive Christians devoted the greatest part of their wealth to public uses, and thought it best laid out when it contributed most to the interest of Christianity. In consequence of this, all Christian churches were in a very early period amply endowed, and without any aid from government; a numerous clergy and many poor, as well as strangers and travellers, were liberally provided for. Great as the demands of the church were, they were amply supplied from the liberality of its proper friends. In later ages superstition, no doubt, joined its influence to that of true religion, in providing for the wants, real or imaginary, of the community, and of Christian churches. Monasteries, universities, and public libraries, fully equal to the wants of all countries, were established and endowed in the most splendid manner by the munificence of individuals, without the interference of public authority; and wretched has been the state of Christianity where it has been otherwise.

Infinite, my brethren, have been the mischiefs that have arisen to religion from the compulsory

compulsory payment of tithes, or any other dues, as they are called, for the maintenance of the clergy, and other religious purposes. This country, beyond any other, groans under the unnatural oppression, and religion itself more particularly suffers by it. True religion requires the free and voluntary support of those who are attached to it, and nobly refuses to be maintained in any other way. What is thus extorted may be given to *superstition*, or something else that assumes the name of *religion*, but will never answer the real purposes of it. It is to be hoped that our hospitals and public infirmaries will never come under such an establishment as that of the church. Whenever that takes place, benevolence and real utility will cease together, and nothing but abuse and private interest will succeed in their place.

The Dissenters, to their immortal honour, though oppressed by the compulsory support of a mode of religion which they justly dislike, are not wanting in the maintenance of that which they really approve; and being most unjustly excluded from the universities,
to

to the founding of which their ancestors, as well as those of the established church (all being then equally Roman catholics) alike contributed, are not wanting in the support of places of Academical education, to which all persons, without distinction, have equal access, and where youth are taught the most liberal principles, both in religion and politics, at much less expence, and with far less risque to their virtue, than where they are taught (if with respect to these important subjects they are taught any thing at all) the most slavish and illiberal ones. But, my brethren, can any person's superfluity (and every person has something which comes under that denomination) be better employed than in supporting such institutions as these, that is, in planting the seeds of virtue, of genuine, unsophisticated Christianity, and of public spirit, in the rising generation ?

Better, my brethren, infinitely better, were it to *die rich in such good works* as these, and thus make the world your heirs, than give wealth to individuals, for whose conduct and liberality you cannot answer, and

and whose independence on personal exertion may do them more harm than good. It is, no doubt, the duty of every man to provide for *his own*, and especially his children, and nearest relations; but wisdom, and even true affection, will set bounds to that provision, and leave them a sufficient motive for industry and œconomy. Every man, however attached to his own offspring, or near relations, has a clear right to consider himself as a member of the community at large; and it is even incumbent upon him to set his successors an example of that generosity and public spirit, in which, if he be a wise and liberal man himself, he must wish that they would follow his steps.

I mention these considerations on account of the difficulties under which our institution now labours; and it is hoped that, great as they are, they will not exceed the ability and liberality of its friends, when the importance of the object is sufficiently attended to by them.

I am happy to have it in my power to attest the excellent state of this institution from

from my own observation : for, having attended the last examination, I can truly say that, concerned as I have been in the business of education myself, I never received equal satisfaction from any performance of the kind. Pupils who gave so good an account of their lectures, must have been carefully instructed ; and the attention that is given to the *discipline* of the College, I have reason to think, is not less than that which is bestowed on instruction. It is hoped that an institution so perfect with respect to every thing *within*, will not want support from *without*.

The Dissenters, notwithstanding all the claims upon them, just and unjust, are a wealthy part of the community ; and habits of industry and frugality, which prevail among them, will not fail to make any set of men rich. Besides, this College not being confined to dissenters, but diffusing its liberal principles to youth in general, it is not doubted but that the liberal and wealthy of other denominations will feel an interest in it, and assist in supporting an institution which

which has for its object, not the benefit of Dissenters only, but that of the country at large, and of posterity in general. Far am I, however, from wishing this, or any other public institution, to be so richly endowed, as to be left independent of the utmost exertions of the tutors and managers to preserve the credit of it. We see enough of the folly of profusion in this respect in our English Universities, and of the wisdom of moderation in those of the Scots.

I shall now proceed to point out some of the great objects respecting the state of this country, of neighbouring nations, and of the world in general, which require peculiar attention and exertion, and to which this institution of yours, small as it is, may be expected to be subservient. And I trust it will be the care of all who are concerned in directing the studies of youth, to lead them to consider themselves not only as private citizens, and to form them for the proper discharge of the duties of husbands, fathers, masters, or even magistrates; but not to forget that they are members of the larger

larger society of mankind, and therefore should feel a real interest in whatever respects general truth, general liberty, and general happiness; and there have lately arisen important situations, which in a most striking manner call for the attention of the friends of truth, and of the greater interests of mankind; such as, in a manner, compel persons of any enlargement of mind, and general benevolence, to look beyond themselves, their own country, or their own times.

Without any spirit of prophecy in ourselves, without any uncommon degree of discernment of *the signs of the times*, and a little aid from the prophecies of Scripture, which always grow clearer in proportion to the near approach of the events predicted, we may all perceive that we must be at the eve of great revolutions, such as will rouse the faculties, and call forth the exertions of great numbers, at present, probably, altogether unknown. But great times and occasions form, and as it were, create, characters adapted to themselves.

It

It seems to have pleased God, in the course of his wise providence, to divide the affairs of men into great and distinct periods, each of which has its respective object, to which the truly wise will not be unattentive, but direct their views, and bend their efforts, accordingly. Not to go so far back as to the great period of *the promulgation of the Gospel*, when God was pleased to call mankind, in a more especial manner, from a state of darkness to light, from the worship of the grosser parts of nature, to the knowledge and worship of himself, and to a purer morality, and more sublime views, than they were before acquainted with; near three centuries are now elapsed since the great period of *the reformation*, antecedent to which Christianity was sunk into a state very similar to that of the former heathenism, the true God and his worship having been in a manner overlooked, and the homage of Christians, divided among a multiplicity of other objects, generally dead men, called saints, their images and even their relicts. Some of the persons were even imaginary, and all of them as impotent, as the objects of the preceding Heathen worship;

worship ; and when superstition in a thousand forms had taken the place of substantial virtue.

By Wickcliff in this country, by John Hus, and Jerom of Prague, but more especially by Zuinglius, Luther, Calvin, and their associates, the Divine Being was pleased to awaken the attention of many persons in this part of the Christian world, so that they could not but perceive the absurdity of this großer idolatry. But, besides leaving untouched the corner-stone of the whole system, in *the idolatrous worship of Jesus Christ*, besides leaving the principle of persecution for conscience-sake in the same state as before, and rather strengthening the unnatural alliance between Christianity and the powers of this world, another quite new and most alarming evil sprung up, though incidentally, from the circumstances of those times. The attention of the more enlightened part of mankind being at that time more particularly drawn to Christianity, and to religion in general, the topics of which were then open to continual discussion, in almost all books, and all conversation, many persons of

good sense, but destitute of sufficient patience and candour, looking no farther than the absurdities then professed by all Christians, were led to reject the whole system; and from this source has arisen such a number of unbelievers, especially in the upper and more polished ranks of life (a number continually and rapidly increasing) as has of late appeared, not a little alarming to those who have not sufficient confidence in the power of truth, or have not been apprized of the beneficial operation even of error.

Unbelievers, however, have rendered a most important service to Christianity, and such as its most zealous friends would perhaps have been the last to do for it. They have industriously exposed the imperfections and blemishes of what was then universally considered as Christianity, and have led the more enlightened Christians, in consequence of attending to their objections, to abandon whatever was spurious and foreign to it, and which, from various sources, had, in the course of many ages, been introduced into it.

To these corruptions of genuine Christianity, and also to the evidence of the system itself, it is of the greatest importance that young men, who are likely to see the world, and have influence in the affairs of it, should in a more particular manner be made to attend. And considering the very corrupted state of Christianity in general, and the prodigious increase of infidelity in consequence of it, there is even now a loud call for men possessed of the spirit of apostles, of confessors, and even of martyrs, men who, without any views to this world, shall wholly devote themselves to the purification and propagation of the gospel, that mankind may again see what they had the fairest opportunity of doing in the primitive times, viz. that a firm belief of Christianity is capable of effectually raising mens' views above this world, and making them only attentive to their interest, and that of their fellow-creatures, in another. The evidence of so clear and steady a faith in some, especially if they be respectable for their ability, their knowledge, and disinterestedness, cannot but have a happy effect upon great numbers, leading them

them to examine what must to them appear a most striking phenomenon; and all that our religion asks is a due attention to its evidence. For the generality of unbelievers are persons whose minds are wholly engrossed by the things of this world, by lucrative, political, or philosophical pursuits, or who, from some other motive, are disinclined to think at all on the subject of religion.

We are, in fact, in a situation similar to that of the apostles. The world requires to be in a manner *re-christianized*. For such is the prevalence of a spurious Christianity on the one hand, and of infidelity on the other, that what has been formerly done is, with respect to a great part of the world, in a manner undone, and the work is to begin again. But there are ample means of doing it, and nothing but zeal, and a proper spirit, is wanting. In another respect, also, we are now in the situation of the primitive Christians, as the friends of reformation have nothing to expect from *power*, or *general favour*, but must look for every species of abuse and persecution that the spirit of

the times will admit of. If even burning alive was a sight that the country would now bear, there exists a spirit which would inflict that horrid punishment, and with as much cool indifference, or savage exultation, as in any preceding age of the world. But youth should be so trained up, as, without fear, to look for every species of ill usage in a good cause. Such is the force of truth, especially when urged by men who themselves feel the force of it, and who respect nothing but truth, that it will now, as formerly, prevail over all opposition. The world may bear down particular *men*, but they cannot bear down a *good cause*; and in the steady support of it such men will not much regard what is done to themselves.

Now, where are we to look for this zeal for the purification and extension of Christianity? Where are youth to be trained in these enlarged and generous principles? Certainly where these principles are at least professedly taught, rather than where they make no part of education at all. When young men are never instructed in the evidence of revelation,

revelation, and go abroad without any proper knowledge of it, they soon lose the little they learned of their nurses, and return finished, and generally profligate, unbelievers ; having had nothing solid to oppose to the ingenuity and the profane jests of the licentious wits they met with, and finding the little religion they had an impediment to the indulgence of their passions.

It is not denied that our universities, as well as others on the continent of Europe, were sufficiently adapted to the times in which they were instituted. They formed such men, and such writers, as the age required. But if the times change, those old establishments do not, as they ought to do, change with them ; and, in consequence of this, institutions which were at first highly useful, as indeed most institutions have been, (having been suggested by real and pressing occasions) may not only cease to be useful, but grow into a real nuisance, as monasteries in all Christian countries have done.

When our universities were founded, all religion was contained in creeds, estab-

blished by councils, and the articles of it were universally considered as things to be *received*, and *maintained*, or at most *explained*. Nothing remained to be *questioned*, or properly *discussed*; and as there were no unbelievers, at least none who durst avow their unbelief, it could not occur to any person, that the evidence of revelation was any necessary article of academical instruction. I believe, however, it is peculiar to our English universities to require an absolute subscription to complex articles of faith, which it is impossible they can have studied, and which it is not generally supposed that they have even read. How dangerous a practice must this be with respect to young minds, precluding all rational inquiry, and initiating them in insincerity, at an age when it is peculiarly necessary to inculcate the strictest regard to truth and virtue.

It is therefore from Dissenters alone, not shackled by the fetters of our universities, that free inquiry into matters of religion can be expected. It is in such places of education as ours, and in such only, that

the

the principles of Christianity can be properly taught, that its evidence can be fairly laid before the mind, and its genuine doctrines freely explored; and where tutors, equally enlightened and zealous, may be expected to infuse their own light and zeal into the minds of others. By encouraging this institution, therefore, you are contributing to re-christianize the world, supplying it with teachers properly qualified for this great purpose.

This great work, however, will be done. The times are fully ripe for it, and proper instruments will, no doubt, be found, whether our places of education have the honour of producing them, or not. Many great articles of reformation have already engaged the attention of the learned, and their opinion, though not countenanced by power, will not fail, in due time, to draw after it that of the unlearned, and of the world at large. In fact, it is *knowledge* that finally governs mankind, and *power*, though ever so refractory, must at length yield to it. The truth of Christianity in general, and that of the great doctrine of it, and of all

revelation, the *divine unity*, cannot long remain in doubt. In both these cases, all the proper evidence either already is, or soon will be produced, and, when duly attended to, it cannot fail to have its effect. It is incumbent upon us, however, to urge every great truth *in season and out of season*, and to train up others who shall adopt, and steadily pursue, the same great purposes. It is zeal more than knowledge that is now wanting, and real knowledge, implying a just sense of the *value*, as well as of the *evidence* of truth, cannot fail, in time, to produce this zeal.

The effect of past labours cannot fail to animate the zeal of all who feel for the interest of Christianity, and the welfare of mankind, to still greater exertions; and the prospects which are now opening upon us are indeed most glorious and encouraging. We clearly see, even the infidel part of the world sees it, that the time is fast approaching, when the power of the Pope, the great soul of spiritual tyranny, will come to an end. A deadly wound was given to it at the Reformation, but that wound seemed to be in

a great

a great measure healed. It continued, however, to fester, and now an universal mortification seems to be taking place. The great supports of the Papal power, the orders of monks in general, and of the Jesuits in particular, together with the Inquisition, are nearly removed. Those princes of Christendom who for a time *gave their power and strength unto the beast*, now seem disposed to strip him of it; and that country in which appeared the last cruel effects of papal tyranny, in that grievous persecution which followed the revocation of the edict of Nantz, can now hardly be said to be popish, but to be possessed by truly catholic Christians. Nay, many enlightened members of that very church, which has been *drunk with the blood of the martyrs*, are the most earnest to explode not only all usurpation properly papal, but all interference of civil power in matters of religion, so as to leave no cause whatever of persecution for conscience sake.

In short, we see the speedy approach of the Popes to their primitive state of simple bishops of Rome; and when their temporal power,

power, which preceded and supported their spiritual authority shall be gone, the latter will soon follow it. When there is no power to inforce the decrees of the See of Rome, they will be no more regarded than those of the See of Canterbury, or of the church which meets in this place. Also, without power, mere *pre-eminence*, if it should be thought worth preserving, will soon be disputed ; and if the preference must be given to churches *founded by the Apostles*, it must be given to that of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, of Corinth, and many others, rather than to that of Rome. As to *general councils*, held by some to be the seat of infallibility, who is there to call them, and how are their decrees to be inforced ?

What an immense field of speculation and exertion is now opening to us from this source ? Things cannot continue long in the state in which they now are, any more than they did when Luther began to preach against indulgences. The subject of *religion*, and especially every thing relating to *religious establishments*, must come under a strict

strict examination. The political state of the world will make discussions of this kind absolutely necessary. Also in the great revolutions which are evidently coming on in ecclesiastical, as well as in civil affairs, *church history* must be carefully studied, as great use cannot fail to be made of it in the important questions which must now come before the public.

There will, on these accounts, be a great call for men well versed in ecclesiastical history, and in religious controversy, as well as in the theory of civil government, for at least a century to come; and where are we to look for these men, but in such places of education as that which you are now instituting? Even statesmen themselves, who have never thought on these subjects before, and who have generally affected to despise them, must now attend to them, and study them. It is what the times will render absolutely necessary. We already see them begin to enter the lists; but the advantage will always be on the side of those who have been regularly taught the first principles of these

these branches of knowledge, and who have been used to *theological*, in conjunction with *historical* investigations, with which the generality of statesmen are wholly unacquainted. These subjects, important as they are, since the welfare of civil society is nearly interested in them, seem to be, at present, but little understood in France, or on the Continent in general. Let us have the ambition of being their instructors ; and it will not detract from our honour, if in time (as has already taken place with respect to the principles of *civil liberty*) they become our masters.

Another great event which I begin to flatter myself we may be looking forwards to, is the fall of the Turkish empire, when an end will be put to a system of government, the most unfriendly to human happiness, and to improvements of all kinds, that the world has ever groaned under ; a government, or rather a despotism, extending over the finest, and first-civilized parts of the globe, at present in a state of misery and depopulation.

Should that empire fall, what a field will be immediately opened for men of spirit, and of

talents of all kinds, to explore the curious and valuable remains of antiquity, perhaps to discover ancient and long-lost writings, to ascertain the geography and natural history of ancient places, by which much light will be thrown upon histories, which will, to the end of the world, attract the attention of mankind, and especially that of the Scriptures? What a field will then be opened for the instruction of the Mahometans, and extending the salutary light of the gospel to countries where at present little remains of it besides the name. The fall of this enormous power (and they are not the friends of mankind, of science, or religion, who wish its support) will probably be followed by other great events, with which the future happy state of the world is still more nearly connected; but on this subject, though with difficulty, I forbear to enlarge*.

Another and most important circumstance which calls us to attend to the proper educa-

* I mean the return of the Jews to Palestine, and the great events connected in prophecy with it. This will be the true æra of the renovation of the world.

tion of our youth, is the new light which is now almost every where bursting out in favour of the civil *rights of men*, and the great objects and uses of *civil government*. While so favourable a wind is abroad, let every young mind expand itself, catch the rising gale, and partake of the glorious enthusiasm ; the great objects of which are the flourishing state of science, arts, manufactures, and commerce, the extinction of wars, with the calamities incident to mankind from them, the abolishing of all useless distinctions, which were the offspring of a barbarous age, (producing an absurd haughtiness in some, and a base servility in others) and a general release for all such taxes, and burdens of every kind, as the public good does not require. In short, to make government as beneficial, and as little expensive and burdensome, as possible.

Let the liberal youth be every where encouraged to study the nature of government, and attend to every thing that makes nations secure and happy. Whatever regulations have this tendency, are equally for the benefit

nefit of the *governors* and the *governed*, because they promote mutual confidence. A tyrant, one who has the property and the lives of his subjects at his own disposal, must ever live in fear of his own, while every man will feel an interest in the preservation, and in the rank, of any person, when they have been taught to consider them as the pledge of their own security and happiness.

Hitherto the great interests of millions have, in most countries, been subject to the caprice of a few, and even the great article of *war*, and the infinite hazards to which states have been exposed by it, have depended upon those who were solely governed by their private views of interest and ambition. Hence, in almost all histories, we see little more than what has been done by *princes* and *ministers of state*; and it is only from incidental circumstances that we are able to collect what has been thought, or done, by *the people*, what has been the progress of science, of arts, of manufactures, and commerce, by which the real welfare of nations is promoted. In general, while the people have

have been labouring for themselves, kings and ministers of state have, by their crooked policy, been counteracting them ; and yet they have never failed to claim all the merit of what they have not been able to hinder the people from doing for themselves. There are, no doubt, exceptions to this observation ; because there have been truly enlightened, and truly patriotic kings and ministers ; but they have been few indeed, compared with the numbers of the weak and the selfish*.

How glorious has been the example of a neighbouring nation in this respect, by which they have, in a manner, insured peace to themselves and to other nations, at the same time disclaiming all views of conquest, and thereby cutting off almost every possible cause of war ? In future history, France must be considered as the first of nations, for their

* What is the power of making peace and war, not for themselves (for that would be of small consequence) but for thousands and millions of others, whose happiness has, unfortunately, been at their disposal, in such hands, but like pen-knives in the hands of children, or loaded fire-arms in the hands of savages, who know nothing of the power or the use of them ?

noble declarations on this subject, especially considering how ambitious and warlike that people has heretofore been.

How glorious will it be for the British youth, and the places of education in which they are formed, to enter the lists with the heroes abroad, who have adopted these new and great objects of civil policy. And shall the youth of Britain be less generous and noble-minded than our brethren in America, or our ancient rivals in France? As we have vye with them in the arts of war, let us now vye with them in the arts of peace; and after having for centuries past most unnaturally harrassed and tormented each other, let us, as becomes peaceable men, good Christians, and good neighbours, study to repair all past injuries; and, laying aside all mean and impolitic jealousy, let us exert ourselves to serve each other to the utmost of our common power.

The prevailing good sense and humanity of the present age, the rising spirit of commerce and œconomy, together with the sense

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which all nations now have of the dreadful weight of public debts, and increasing taxes, enable us to prognosticate with certainty the approach of those happy times, in which the sure prophecies of scripture inform us, that *wars shall cease*, and universal peace and harmony take place. This event will be the more favourable to revelation, as it will have been considerably forwarded by those who are its enemies, and who least of all imagine that they are labouring to fulfil any prophecy, most of them probably having never heard of any such prediction.

But let not all the honour of these glorious labours be engrossed by unbelievers. Let those who embrace the pure faith, and who breathe the pure and pacific spirit, of the gospel, exert themselves most of all to accomplish the same end. *The harvest truly is great*, and there is room for *many labourers*, each with his own views, to give aid to the influence of good sense, or of religion, and to get the better of a false, barbarous and ruinous policy, that has so long governed the world, and retarded the natural progress of improvements of all kinds.

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The seeds of all great improvements have been long sown in this and other countries, but much time, and great care, are requisite to bring them to maturity. The seeds of a purer Christianity were sown by Socinus, and others, as early as the age of Luther, but, till of late, a violent bigotry has been able to check its growth. The genuine principles of civil government were taught by Locke and others, at the time of our Revolution, and indeed in an earlier period in this country ; and yet the natural *rights of men* are by many still disregarded, and the pretended and usurped rights of particular *classes of men*, whose interests are incompatible with those of the great majority of their fellow-citizens, are held up in opposition to them.

The great doctrine of *the kingdom of Christ not being of this world*, was preached, though not in its full extent, by the famous Hoadly and others near a century ago ; and yet this most unnatural *alliance of church and state*, as it is called, or rather that of churchmen and statesmen, (for it is highly injurious to the true interests of both church and state)

is still ostentatiously preached up, not only by divines, but by laymen. Even different, and formerly hostile establishments, feel a strong sympathy for each other in their present common danger; protestants themselves openly lamenting the fall of a popish church; as clearly perceiving that, in fact, both their churches stand upon the same ground, and justly apprehending that the same light and good sense which has been fatal to the one, cannot fail in due time to overthrow the other.

In the present consternation of all the friends of these establishments, they discover every symptom of the fulfilment of that prophecy in the book of Revelation, which says that *their kingdom shall be full of darkness*, and that they shall *gnaw their tongues for pain, but without repenting of their deeds*. The late writings in favour of liberty, civil and religious, have been like a beam of light suddenly thrown among owls, bats, or moles, who, being incapable of receiving any pleasure or benefit from it, can only cry out, and hide themselves, when the light approaches, and disturbs them. But may this light increase,

crease, and let all who are offended by it retire into whatever holes they think proper. May the sons of this institution eagerly catch, and wisely direct, this beam of sacred truth, and let them apply it, like Ithuriel's spear, to every object without distinction, whether of a civil or of a religious nature.

In this steady and fearless pursuit of truth, let them be taught to despise alike the contempt of the pretended philosopher, and the rage of the bigot. But let them be apprized that there is no wisdom, or advantage, in *throwing pearls before swine*, and that when prejudices of any kind are become inveterate, all labour is in vain. Let them be taught that the chief objects of their instruction are the young, like themselves, and especially those in the middle classes of life, such as those of whom the converts to Christianity in the early ages generally consisted. The lowest of the vulgar will not easily be brought to think on subjects that are wholly *new* to them; though of the greatest importance; but every means should be used to excite their attention, and to prepare them for religious instruction. As to persons in the

highest classes of life, they are chiefly swayed by their connections, and very seldom have the courage to think and act for themselves, though they have the most glorious opportunity of distinguishing themselves by so doing.

But while we are endeavouring to extend the boundaries of light, and to contract those of darkness, let us be thankful to Almighty God, on a comparison of the former times with the present, on account of the great superiority in our favour. Infinitely is our present civilization superior to the barbarism of the feudal times, when nothing was gained for the people (for those who *studied to be quiet and to mind their own business*) but by forced concessions from kings or nobles ; when princes in temporals, and priests in spirituals, left nothing of rational liberty in the world ; and when death, in the most frightful forms, was the sure consequence of every attempt of men to think for themselves, or to enlighten the minds of others.

Let us also make all due allowance for the prejudices of others, those who live in darkness

ness in the midst of the growing light of the age. For though many of those who are the enemies of liberty, civil or religious, are governed by their secular interest, and are determined, notwithstanding their convictions, to oppose all improvements, others really think *they do God service* in opposing *innovation*. Let us consider that all great improvements in the state of society ever have been, and ever must be, the growth of time, the result of the most peaceable, but assiduous endeavours, in pursuing the slowest of all processes, that of enlightening the minds of men; and that, after all, this noble end has seldom been attained without great sacrifices, from generous and disinterested individuals, who, though the greatest benefactors of mankind, receive no reward in the present world, but in the gratitude of posterity, and in Heaven.

Let us, however, assiduously cherish this generous magnanimity in young minds, and educate men, not for themselves only, but for their country, and the world. Our Saviour faithfully apprized his disciples, that *they would be hated of all men for his name's sake*,

sake, and that they must look for their recompence *at the resurrection of the just*. Let us not then deceive any man, and least of all, the young and unexperienced, but fairly give them their choice of the honourable service of mankind, and of God, with the approbation of their own minds, and the hope of future glory, or of the emoluments of this world without them. It will be easy to a tutor, who himself feels as he ought to do, to infuse his own generous sentiments into the minds of his pupils, and send them forth ardent in every public and good cause, with no idea of *living to themselves*, but inspired with zeal and fortitude, and at the same time conducted by prudence, to turn their backs on the inglorious vale of pleasure, and to climb those arduous steeps, on the summit of which they will find *the temple of virtue*, and through that, *the temple of honour*, and the road to immortality.

Let me add, that we should be the more assiduous in the instruction of our youth, in order to supply the place of those valuable characters of which death is continually depriving us; that *instead of the fathers there may*

may be the children, equally enlightened, and equally zealous in the cause of truth and virtue. It is impossible not to feel the force of this consideration in a peculiar manner, when we reflect on our recent loss of so excellent a man as Dr. Price ; a man whom we need not hesitate to call an ornament of his profession, of his country, and of his age ; a man, who, for the most unaffected simplicity, the strictest integrity, the purest patriotism, and the most extensive benevolence, perhaps never had a superior, and but few equals.

Every man who distinguishes himself will be proportionably exposed to calumny, and so was Dr. Price, especially on account of a most excellent discourse delivered from this pulpit, a discourse glowing with the most exalted sentiments of civil and religious liberty, and received with the loudest applause, by a nation lately awakened to a just sense of their value, and calumniated by those who never knew, or had lost all sense of it. As to calumny in a good cause, we may easily despise it, when we consider that it was the lot of our Saviour, and of Paul. Such censure is the greatest praise,

praise, because the surest mark of merit. When time shall have extinguished prejudice, it will be deemed no small blot in any character, how excellent soever in other respects, to have thought, or said, ill of Dr. Price, and no small subject of boasting, to have been known to him, and respected by him.

May the students of Hackney College, who have had so good an opportunity of knowing Dr. Price, be more especially fired by his example, and ambitious to supply his place. And I trust that our loss, though great, is far from being irreparable. We have many young men among the Dissenters, who promise as much as he did at the same early period of life; and such are the superior advantages, the increasing light, and the increasing spirit of the age, that, with the same zeal in the cause of truth, of virtue, and of general happiness, they may see farther; and as obstacles of all kinds daily give way to vigorous efforts, they may effect more, than he was able to do. He has sown that they may reap, and at the same time, by sowing still more, prepare for a still greater harvest in succeeding ages.

A PRAYER

A P R A Y E R,

BY THE REV. THOMAS BELSHAM.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful God, we enter into thy gates with thanksgiving, and into thy courts with praise.

It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, for it is pleasant, and praise is comely. We will bless the Lord, for the Lord is good: his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth throughout all generations. We will be thankful unto him, and speak well of his name.

We contemplate with joyful and admiring hearts, thy wonderful works in this visible creation. Thou hast made all things by the word of thy power, and for thy pleasure they are and were created. They continue unto this day according to thine ordinances, for all are thy servants.

Thou orderest the revolutions of the seasons, thou appointest the grateful and necessary vicissitudes of seed time and harvest, of summer and winter, of cold and heat, of night and day.

Thou

Thou bleftest the springing of the year. Thou visitest the earth and waterest it. Thou makeft the graff to grow upon the mountains. The pastures are clothed with flocks. The vallies are covered over with corn. The little hills rejoice on every fide. Thy paths drop fatness. Whitherfoever we turn our eye, we behold the footsteps of infinite benevolence. This fpacious earth is full of Thee.

All thy creatures wait upon Thee. Thou givest them their meat in due season. What thou givest them they gather. Thou openest thy hand, they are filled with good. They are happy in their exiſtence, and in their various forms they ex-press their gratitude to the benevolent author of their being, and of their enjoyments.

With peculiar emotions of gratitude and de-light we trace thy wise and merciful dispensa-tions towards the human species. We admire thy wisdom in the formation of man, in the curious structure of the corporeal organs, in the wonderful powers and faculties of the mind, in the generous, social, and sympathetic affec-tions, in the moral fense, in the religious feelings, and in the capacity of man for endless improve-ment in knowledge, virtue, and happiness.

We bleſſ thy goodness for the liberal provision which thou haſt made for the gratification of the feneses, for the cultivation of the mental powers,

powers, for the pleasing exercise of the social and benevolent affections, for the instruction of mankind in religion and virtue, and for the discipline and improvement of the mind in its progress through life.

We are thankful for all those attainments in knowledge and in virtue, which have been the natural consequences of this wise and salutary discipline, for all those great and good characters which in successive ages have appeared to enlighten and to bless the world, and for all that happiness which men have enjoyed in their individual capacities, in their domestic relations, and as members of civil society.

We are especially thankful for thy moral dispensations to mankind, and particularly for the revelation of the gospel, which discovers in the clearest light, the unity of God, thine unrivalled majesty and excellence, thy supreme and universal government, thine unchangeable truth and rectitude, thy boundless and everlasting mercy, which teaches ignorant and sinful men the path of wisdom and of virtue, which enforces the practice of duty by the most powerful and engaging motives, which has brought life and immortality to light. Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift.

We bless Thee that the interesting truths of the gospel were confirmed by the miraculous gifts

gifts and powers of the first authorised publishers of it ; and in particular, that the resurrection of the dead has been attested, sealed, and exemplified, by the resurrection of the author and finisher of our faith, the Lord Jesus Christ, the prince and the leader of life, the first-begotten from the dead.

We thank Thee that though this humble and spiritual religion was, at its first promulgation, discouraged and opposed by the vices and prejudices of mankind, and though the professors of it were exposed to the most cruel and barbarous persecution, thou didst, nevertheless, raise up a succession of faithful witnesses, who stedfastly adhered to the gospel, at the hazard of all that was dear to them in life, many of whom sealed their testimony with their blood, and who thus confirmed the original evidence of the christian religion, by an attestation which must command the assent of every candid and serious enquirer to the end of time.

We rejoice in all the benefits which have accrued to the world from the propagation of christianity, that in proportion as the light and spirit of the mild and benevolent religion of Jesus hath prevailed in the world, it hath illuminated the understanding, it hath softened the manners, it hath enlarged the heart, it hath dispelled the mists of error and superstition, it hath inspired the love of truth, together with a generous

nerous and diffusive benevolence, and hath been eminently conducive to the interests of freedom, of virtue, and of human happiness.

We rejoice that when in thy unsearchable wisdom, the religion of Christ had been suffered to be corrupted and debased to such a degree, that the simplicity of evangelical doctrine seemed to be almost overwhelmed and lost in the extravagancies of error and superstition; this divine religion by its native energy, and by the irresistible force of truth, purged itself in a very considerable degree from the dross of human inventions, and that at the glorious æra of the reformation from popery, there were many who stood forth as the champions of true religion, and who excited the attention of mankind, and accelerated the progress of truth, by the severe struggles, and the costly sacrifices to which they chearfully submitted, for the sake of truth and a good conscience.

We thank Thee that the christian religion is still advancing in its course, that it is gradually purifying itself from remaining corruptions, and that the light of truth is advancing with such increasing splendor, as to encourage a hope that the time cannot be far distant when every anti-christian error shall be, completely eradicated, and when christianity shall appear in its primitive and beautiful simplicity. Hasten, O Lord,

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the accomplishment of this desirable event. May thy kingdom come. And may there never be wanting a succession of able and faithful men, who, in the true spirit of their great master, and of the first teachers of the christian religion, shall esteem it the highest honour to be made instrumental in promoting the cause of truth and righteousness whether by their labours, or by their sufferings.

We rejoice in the peculiar felicity of the age in which we live, that science and true philosophy have advanced to a degree beyond that of any former period, that the arts which embellish human life, which mitigate its pains, and which multiply and enhance its comforts, are carried to an unprecedented degree of perfection, that the rights of men are accurately defined and more generally understood, that liberty, civil and religious, hath been extended to multitudes who have hitherto groaned under the yoke of a barbarous despotism, that discussions of the most important kind, and beneficial tendency, are permitted and encouraged, that so little restraint is laid upon freedom of enquiry and of instruction that the mild and enlightened spirit of the times corrects the severity of persecuting laws, and that in consequence of all this, the human species are in a much better

better and happier state than they were in any former period of time.

We triumph in the rapid and continually accelerating improvement of the world, that the times teem with events favorable to the liberty and happiness of mankind, so that we may now look forward with joyful expectation to the accomplishment of the prophecies recorded in the scriptures, and to the fulfilment of which the state of things is so evidently tending, when the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the feas, and when the whole world shall be enlightened and virtuous, and free and happy.

May every seminary of education, the object of which is to open the minds of young persons, to form them to wisdom and goodness, and to qualify them for acting their part in life with propriety and dignity, be favoured with thy approbation.

Especially vouchsafe to smile upon that Institution which is the occasion of our present meeting, and grant that it may be eminently subservient to the interests of learning, of liberty, of truth, and virtue.

May the patrons of this Institution by whose generous exertions it was originally founded, and hath been hitherto supported, and who feel a paternal interest in its prosperity, not only enjoy that satisfaction which arises from the consciousness of having acted upon the best prin-

ciples, but likewise that pleasure which accompanies the success of wise and well-directed endeavours to promote the welfare of their fellow-creatures, and especially the improvement and happiness of the rising generation.

May thy Servants, who are appointed to the important charge of instruction in this Institution be eminently qualified for the honourable and successful discharge of their office. May they be actuated by the best motives, may they be solicitous to infuse into the breasts of their pupils a spirit of free, of candid, and of resolute enquiry; an ardent love of liberty, of truth and of rectitude; a virtuous ambition to excel in every thing great and good; and may it be their constant endeavour to form them to the character of men of science and literature, of patriotic citizens, of sincere, enlightened and benevolent christians. And O God, the Fountain of wisdom and of grace, suffer not faithful exertions for the accomplishment of so desirable an end to be wholly and finally unsuccessful.

May the young persons who are educating for the christian ministry possess that temper and spirit which will best qualify them for the duties of the honourable office they have in view. May the love of truth and goodness be the predominant principles in their breasts. May they form just conceptions of the nature, the evidences, and the obligations of religion, may they

they reverence the scriptures, may they enquire into the sacred oracles with humble, with teachable, with firm, and unbiassed minds, with a fixed purpose to embrace, and upon every proper occasion to avow, what appears to them to be the genuine doctrine of revelation, without fear, and without disguise ; may they not corrupt the word of God, but may they, above all things, maintain simplicity of character, and a good conscience. Give them O God fortitude of mind. Let them not shrink back from persecution for conscience sake, but may they esteem it their honour, if they are accounted worthy of suffering in the cause of truth and virtue. May they be eminent examples of piety benevolence and christian zeal : and may the uniform excellence of their character evince to the world that the highest attainments in religious virtue are the genuine and natural result of the most rational and consistent views of christian doctrine.

Thus may they fulfil the best wishes of their instructors and friends, thus may they qualify themselves for distinguished usefulness in the world, and thus may they be prepared to fill up the places of those wise and venerable men of the benefit of whose pious labours and illustrious examples the church is from time to time deprived by death. And Oh ! may a double portion of that spirit of meekness and humility, of

candour and charity, of fidelity and zeal, of benevolence and devotion, which animated our departed instructors, which dignified their character, and enlarged their usefulness, be widely diffused amongst those who are left behind; and especially the rising generation of ministers; and may such ministers never be wanting to support the cause of truth and virtue in the world, to the latest period of time.

May those young persons who are training up in this Institution for stations in civil life improve continually in solid, useful, and ornamental learning. May they cultivate fervent and unaffected piety as the best principle of uniform integrity and universal benevolence, and wherever their future lot may be cast, may they distinguish themselves as the zealous and enlightened friends of truth and literature, of freedom and of virtue.

These our humble supplications and thanksgivings we offer up in cheerful reliance upon thine infinite mercy revealed to mankind by Jesus Christ thy son, in whose words we address Thee as: Our Father who art in heaven. Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power and the glory for ever. *Amen.*

